

Nimuendajú: The Tukuna

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835 word of the crime and sent someone to investigate. Learning this, Abilio voluntarily
 684 went to Belém to declare that he was the killer. His explanation that "they lived
 648 like dogs" was no reason at all to the Neobrazilians, who did not understand it.
 so he returned home. A few days later the subprefect of police ordered his arrest:
 but after several days he was released, to the great satisfaction of the Indians of
 Tacana, who were said to have been determined to free him by force. As a matter
 of fact, after all this, Joaquim tauaru' did appear to me to be mentally unbalanced
 [732] when I encountered him. The Indians said that he had already acquired the nature
 of a dog: one girl, who watched him from a hiding place, observed that he dug
 the earth with his fingernails like a dog!

LAW

685 *Crimes.*—I have never heard of theft occurring among the compound families
 characteristic of Tukuna local groupings, but it does happen away from their con-
 fines, even among fellow tribesmen. The person robbed, eventually aided by his
 relatives, deals personally with the thief. Willful thieves cannot hope for very
 gentle treatment on the part of the victims. A certain nai'a'kij of Igarapé de Belém
 broke into a trunk during the owner's absence, stealing the contents, but was sur-
 prised and forced to return everything. Some time later he repeated the misdeed
 in another house, but not so cleverly as to avoid suspicion of robbery. Since nai'a'k
 obstinately refused to return his loot, the victim promptly shot him; but the wound
 was not fatal.

574 The great majority of crimes involving death or injury take place during the
 674 work parties and celebrations, being due to drunkenness. As I have already indi-
 cated, they are almost always without a serious motive, simply because alcohol,
 in certain Tukuna, arouses not the sexual instinct but the desire to quarrel, which
 is directed most of the time against their own relatives. A fight at Igarapé da Rita
 that ended with the death of one person and the wounding of two began with in-
 sults which an Indian for no apparent reason hurled at his father. Strangely numer-
 ous are the quarrels among drunken brothers-in-law. Could this be some a priori
 subconscious hostile feeling against the intrusion of another clan into the family?
 Moreover, in the language of the Guaraní, who have no such clan organization as
 the Tukuna, the word for brother-in-law, *toyayá(ra)*, means also "competitor."
 and the verb *ahovayá* means "to be against."

672 In any case, as I have already explained, the Tukuna appear to consider drunk-
 273 enness an extenuating circumstance, which absolves the criminal almost completely
 of responsibility. This point of view appears in the lack of concern about such
 incidents: "He was soured!" they say, and that is the end of it. Even a murdered
 man's own relatives, at first naturally enraged, gradually accept this point of view,
 which they would never do if the crime were committed in cold blood. However
 a certain aversion to the slayer always remains, and if he is so imprudent as to
 glory in the deed, the relatives of the victim may still have a sudden and violent
 reaction and seek revenge. It is, however, true that a killing by a drunken man
 will not per se provoke reprisal.

* See pp. 106 ff. for the story of the execution of an evil shaman.

is unnecessary; a boy and girl may meet at a feast and leave married at the end. The wife's parents never renounce their authority over her and do not permit the husband to take her far away, which results in a certain matrilineal tendency. [584] [591] [593]

Polygyny even today is considered licit, but cases of bigamy are rare. In the only case known, a famous man who was both priest and chief had three sisters as wives simultaneously. Other cases of sororate have occurred. The levirate, also formerly frequent, was considered desirable. 595 587

Jealousy may cause violent quarrels between husband and wife, but never murder and rarely divorce. Adultery, though causing scenes, is insufficient reason for divorce. Guilt is always placed on the woman. The father's authority in the family is great. 593 586 684

In case of robbery, the offended party requires restitution and sometimes is extremely severe with the thief. 685

Injuries and death occur almost exclusively when people are drunk during a feast, for alcohol stimulates certain Tucuna to fight. Drunkenness absolves the murderer from responsibility, but the victim's relatives always feel resentful and hostile toward him. 672 733

A house is the property of its builder, i.e., the head of the family. The clearing belongs to the woman by whom it was made. 423

The Tucuna no longer have chiefs as they are too individualistic to accept authority and as the civilized people have discredited the office by designating chiefs through whom they could exploit and oppress the Indians. Formerly, chiefs of local groups were heads of large families whose magic powers, intelligence, and ability in dealing with foreigners gave them prestige. There was never, however, a chief for the entire nation. 622 178

Death.—Until the end of the past century, the deceased and all his ornaments were placed in a large chicha jar which was covered with a vessel, buried in a cemetery, and the site sometimes marked with a rod of mulrapiranga. Well-liked people sometimes were buried in the house. They put a little food, beverage, and a fire on the grave, periodically renewing it. Tassmann (1930, p. 564) incorrectly attributed secondary burial to the Tucuna. 764 [114]

WARFARE

The Tucuna are not warlike. They defended themselves against the Omagua, their principal enemies, and drove them to the banks of the Solimões River only when the latter had invaded their lands. They fought with arrows, poisoned spears, and round tapir-hide shields, and protected their paths with poisoned caltrops. They did not take prisoners or keep trophies from slain enemy. They never fought civilized people, except to avenge personal insults. 721 648 [411] [727]

ESTHETIC AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

532 Art.—The *Tucuna* were fine sculptors. Their carved figures on the dancing sticks, stools, and tucumã nut figures in their necklaces are at times very artistic. Painting is restricted mainly to masks and pottery ornamentation.

533 Music.—During feasts, the *Tucuna* sing in a falsetto voice so low that it can hardly be heard. Three important instruments are: (1) a wooden, tubular megaphone into which they speak and sing and which is 22 feet (6¾ m.) long with an opening 5 inches (12 cm.) wide and a mouthpiece 2 inches (5 cm.) long; (2) a conical trumpet 13 feet to 19½ feet (4 to 6 m.) long made of a strip of bark wound spirally; and (3) a piston whistle made of liana bark. The last is always sounded before the other two. In any ceremony there is always a faithful imitation of the European drum and a *Thryotis*-shell rattle, the latter taking the place of the conventional maracá, which is unknown. The old form of drum was possibly the shell of a chelonium, which now is used only in one ceremonial. There are also panpipes, bone flutes, and bamboo horns.

[172] Adult games.—In shuttlecock, a maize-husk ball is batted into the air with the palm of the hand by men standing in a ring. In a tug-of-war in which a thick liana is used, one team of men competes against another. A ring-and-pin game is played by two men facing each other. Grown girls make cats cradles with threads wrapped around the fingers, toes, and head.

273 Beverages.—Women make alcoholic beverages from maize, cooked bitter manioc, and half-burned cakes (beijú) of manioc; the last was adopted from the Neo-Brazilians. Today many men are addicted to rum.

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SHAMANISM

754 Even today many Indians possess magic powers to help or harm others. These powers come from intercourse with the spirits of certain trees with which an old shaman puts his disciple in contact. The neophyte shaman receives a magic substance which contains invisible thorns. He throws these into his victim's body, where they reproduce and cause his death unless another shaman sucks them out and completes the cure by applying herbs. The shaman chews tobacco (formerly, he used a tubular wooden pipe with an opening on the side for the mouth) to become possessed of the spirit which supplied the magic pathogenic substance to the witch doctor. Chewing tobacco identifies the evil shaman.

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753 Children fall ill when the spirits of the trees kidnap their souls. Epidemics come from the sun and are spread by the wind.

683 When the *Tucuna* are convinced that a shaman is responsible for one or more deaths, their revenge even reaches his relatives. In 1942, three
672 *Tucuna* killed a much-feared shaman and his two sons. The avengers